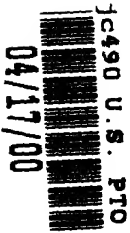


04-18-20



**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

Anticipated Classification  
of this Application:

Attorney Docket No.: F-118

Class:

Date: April 17, 2000

Subclass:

Prior Application:

Group Art Unit: 2761

Examiner: Jamara Franklin

**REQUEST FOR FILING A CONTINUATION APPLICATION**  
**UNDER 37 CFR 1.53(b)**

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

This is a request for filing a continuation application under 37 CFR 1.53(b), of pending prior application serial number 09/224,256, filed on December 30, 1998, by Richard W. Heiden, et al. for POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF THIRD PARTY MESSAGES.

1. Attached is a copy of the prior application, including the specification, claims, drawings and declaration and power of attorney as originally filed.
2. Cancel in this application original claim(s) 2-23 of the prior application before calculating the filing fee for this application. (At least one original independent claim must be retained for filing purposes.)

3. The filing fee is calculated below:

**CLAIMS AS FILED IN THE PRIOR APPLICATION  
LESS ANY CLAIMS CANCELED BY AMENDMENT**

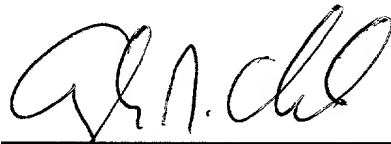
Basic Fee							\$ 690.00
Claims Fee	Number Filed		Number Extra		Rate		
Total Claims	22	- 20 =	2	X	\$18.00	=	\$ 36.00
Independent Claims	4	- 3 =	1	X	\$78.00	=	\$ 78.00
Multiple Dependent Claims					\$260.00	=	\$
Total Filing Fee							\$ 804.00

4. Please charge our Deposit Account Number **16-1885** in the amount of \$ 804.00 for the filing fee.
5. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required or credit any overpayment to Account No. **16-1885**. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.
6. The prior application is assigned of record to Pitney Bowes Inc.
7. A preliminary amendment of this application is enclosed. (Claims added by this amendment have been properly numbered consecutively beginning with the number next following the highest numbered original claim in the prior application.)
8. Address all future communications to:

Angelo N. Chaclos  
Pitney Bowes Inc.  
Intellectual Property and  
Technology Law Department  
35 Waterview Drive  
P.O. Box 3000  
Shelton, CT 06484-8000

9. I hereby verify that the attached application is a true copy of prior application serial number as originally filed on December 30, 1998.

The undersigned declares further that all statements made herein of his/her own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so much are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issuing thereon.



Angelo N. Chaclos  
Reg. No. 39,134  
Attorney of Record  
Telephone (203) 924-3844

PITNEY BOWES INC.  
Intellectual Property and  
Technology Law Department  
35 Waterview Drive  
P.O. Box 3000  
Shelton, CT 06484-8000

**CERTIFICATE OF MAILING**

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to:

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

on April 17, 2000  
Date of Deposit

Angelo N. Chaclos  
Name of Registered Rep.

  
Signature

April 17, 2000  
Date

00440" 8/805560

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

In re patent application of: ) Attorney Docket No.: F-118  
Richard W. Heiden, et al. ) Group Art Unit:  
Serial No.: ) Examiner:  
Filed: ) Date: April 17, 2000  
Title: POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF  
THIRD PARTY MESSAGES

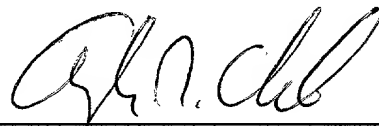
**CERTIFICATE OF MAILING BY EXPRESS MAIL**

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

In accordance with the provisions of 37 CFR 1.10, I hereby certify that the attached Certificate Of Mailing By Express Mail, Request For Filing A Continuation Application Under 37 CFR § 1.53(b); Patent Application consisting of twenty-two (22) pages, four (4) sheets of drawings, Declaration and Power of Attorney was deposited with the U.S. Postal Service for delivery by Express Mail on April 17, 2000. The number of the Express Mail mailing label is EJ706017961US.

Respectfully submitted,



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**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

In re patent application of: ) Attorney Docket No.: F-118  
Richard W. Heiden, et al. ) Group Art Unit:  
Serial No.: ) Examiner:  
Filed: ) Date: April 17, 2000  
Title: POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF  
THIRD PARTY MESSAGES

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

In response to the Office Action dated , please amend the above identified application as follows:

**In the Specification:**

On page 1, please delete lines 4 - 14, and insert the following --This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Number 09/224,256, entitled POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF THIRD PARTY MESSAGES (Attorney Docket E-796).--

**In the claims:**

Please cancel Claims 2-23.

09/224,256-041700

Please add the following new claims.

--24. A system, comprising:

- a printing system including a printer for printing on an item intended for a recipient;

- a data center in operative communication with the printing system, the printing system being located remotely from the data center, the data center including a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective message data representative of a message;

- a control system in operative communication with the data center and the printing system for:

- obtaining recipient information; and

- using the recipient information to identify a subset of messages available for printing on the item.

25. The system of claim 24, wherein:

- the control system is further for:

- receiving from a user an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing.

26. The system of claim 25, wherein:

- the control system is further for:

- compensating the user for printing the selected message; and

- charging the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message for printing the selected message.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein:

- each of the plurality of advertiser accounts further includes restriction data; and

- the control system is further for:

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[illegible]

28. The system of claim 27, wherein:  
each of the restriction data, respectively, includes addressee restriction data,  
including at least information relating to one of the following:  
commercial/residential restrictions; demographic restrictions and  
geographic restrictions, and non-addressee restriction data, including at  
least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions;  
multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and  
budget restrictions.
29. The system of claim 28, wherein:  
the recipient information includes address information obtained from the user.
30. The system of claim 24, wherein:  
each of the plurality of advertiser accounts further includes restriction data;  
and  
the control system is further for:  
using the recipient information in combination with the restriction data  
from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify the subset of  
messages available for printing.
31. A method of operating a data center, the method comprising the step(s) of:  
maintaining a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser  
accounts including respective message data representative of a message  
for printing on an item intended for a recipient;  
obtaining recipient information; and  
using the recipient information to identify a subset of messages available for  
printing on the item.

32. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step(s) of:  
receiving an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages  
that is authorized for printing.
33. The method of claim 32, further comprising the step(s) of:  
compensating a user for printing the selected message; and  
charging the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message for  
printing the selected message.
34. The method of claim 33, further comprising the step(s) of:  
storing restriction data for each of the plurality of advertiser accounts,  
respectively; and  
using the recipient information in combination with the restriction data from the  
plurality of advertiser accounts to identify the subset of messages available  
for printing.
35. The method of claim 34, wherein:  
each of the restriction data, respectively, includes addressee restriction data,  
including at least information relating to one of the following:  
commercial/residential restrictions; demographic restrictions and  
geographic restrictions, and non-addressee restriction data, including at  
least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions;  
multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and  
budget restrictions.
36. The method of claim 35, wherein:  
the recipient information includes address information obtained from the user.
37. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step(s) of:  
storing restriction data for each of the plurality of advertiser accounts,  
respectively; and



using the recipient information in combination with the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify the subset of messages available for printing.

38. A memory system accessible by an application program being executed on a data processing system, comprising:

advertiser account information including a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective message data representative of a message for printing on an item intended for a recipient; and  
recipient information for use in identifying a subset of messages available for printing on the item.

39. The memory system of claim 38, comprising:

an indication from a user of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing.

40. The memory system of claim 39, comprising:

compensation information for the user for printing the selected message; and  
charge information for the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message for printing the selected message.

41. The memory system of claim 40, comprising:

restriction information corresponding to each of the plurality of advertiser accounts, respectively; and  
wherein the recipient information may be used in combination with the restriction information from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify the subset of messages available for printing.

42. The memory system of claim 41, wherein:

each of the restriction information, respectively, includes addressee restriction data, including at least information relating to one of the following:

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Signature [Signature] Date 11/11/11

**POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING**  
**SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF THIRD PARTY MESSAGES**

**Cross Reference to Related Applications**

This application is related to the following co-pending applications filed  
5 concurrently herewith and commonly assigned to the assignee of this  
application: US Patent Application Number aa/aaa,aaa, entitled POSTAGE  
PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING VARIABLE SUBSIDIES FOR PRINTING OF  
THIRD PARTY MESSAGES (Attorney Docket No. E-803), US Patent  
Application Number aa/aaa,aaa, entitled POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM  
10 HAVING A DIGITAL COUPON DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (Attorney Docket  
No. E-737 and US Patent Application Number aa/aaa,aaa, entitled  
PRODUCTION MAIL SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIES FOR PRINTING OF  
THIRD PARTY MESSAGES ON MAILPIECES (Attorney Docket No. E-806),  
all of which are specifically incorporated herein by reference.

**Field of the Invention**

This invention relates generally to postage printing systems. More  
particularly, this invention is directed to a postage printing system including  
subsidies for printing of third party messages.

**Background of the Invention**

20 Postage printing systems are well known in the art. A typical postage  
meter (one example of a postage printing system) applies evidence of  
postage, commonly referred to as a postal indicia, to an envelope or other  
mailpiece and accounts for the value of the postage dispensed. As is well  
known, postage meters include an ascending register, that stores a running  
25 total of all postage dispensed by the meter, and a descending register, that  
holds the remaining amount of postage credited to the meter and that is  
reduced by the amount of postage dispensed during a transaction. The  
postage meter generally also includes a control sum register which provides a

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check upon the descending and ascending registers. The control sum register has a running account of the total funds being added into the meter. The control sum register must always correspond with the summed readings of the ascending and descending registers. The control sum register is the total amount of postage ever put into the machine and it is alterable only when adding funds to the meter. In this manner, by inspecting the various registers and securing them from tampering, the dispensing of postal funds may be accurately recorded, tracked and accounted for.

More recently, a postage printing system has been developed where the accounting structure described above is no longer resident with the user. Sometimes referred to as a "virtual postage meter", these types of postage printing systems dispense postage electronically over suitable communication channels (LAN, WAN, telephone lines, Internet, etc.). The user maintains an account with a remotely located data center (maintained by an authorized postage meter manufacturer) and receives postage securely using appropriate electronic data interchange techniques. At a later time, the user is invoiced for the amount of postage dispensed and any other fees associated with maintaining the account with the data center. Oftentimes, a secret code or token is derived from information particular to the mailpiece (the indicated postage amount, date, recipient address information, etc.) and is incorporated or embedded into the postal indicia for later use by a postal authority in verifying the integrity of the postal indicia. Examples of such systems are described in U.S. Patent No. 4,725,718 and U.S. Patent No. 5,454,038.

It is also known to print selected messages (sometimes referred to as ad slogans although such messages are not restricted to advertisements) along with the postal indicia. Generally, the message bears no relation to the postal indicia. In traditional postage meters employing either rotary drum or flat bed printing technology, the message was printed along with the postal indicia by including an additional printing die representative of the message. These dies were typically costly to manufacture and distribute and cumbersome for the postage meter user to install. Examples of die based systems for printing messages are disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,168,804

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and U.S. Patent No. 5,024,153. More recently, the postage meter industry has begun to incorporate digital (dot matrix) printing technology which obviates the need for dies as the digital printer may be supplied with suitable drive signals to effect printing of the message. Examples of digital printing technology based systems for printing messages are disclosed in U.S. Patent  
5 No. 4,831,554 and U.S. Patent No. 5,509,109.

Additionally, U.S. Patent No. 4,831,554 teaches a system that allows the postage meter manufacturer to broker the use of advertising space by third parties on the envelopes. In concept, a third party advertiser may wish  
10 to take advantage of the space on the outgoing envelopes from a particular postage meter user to advertise its own products and/or services. In this system, a message, the content of which originates from a third party, is stored electronically within the postage meter. The postage meter keeps a count of the number of times that the message is printed in conjunction with  
15 the postal indicia. This count is then used by the data center to provide a subsidy to the postage meter user during a subsequent billing cycle and is correspondingly also used by the data center to invoice the third party advertiser.

Although this brokering system represents a new business opportunity  
20 for postage meter manufacturers, it suffers from certain drawbacks and disadvantages. First, the third party advertiser cannot exercise any control over when the message is dispensed. Thus, if the message is time sensitive, then the relevance of the message may be lost after a certain date and the third party advertiser would be compelled to pay for advertising that was not  
25 effective. For example, advertisements directed to promotions that have expiration dates (rebate programs, concert tickets, limited time offers, etc.) are useless once the relevant time period has passed. Second, the third party advertiser cannot exercise any control over the number of messages dispensed. Thus, if the third party advertiser allocated a fixed advertising  
30 budget and accordingly only wanted to pay for a limited number envelopes containing the message, then the third party advertiser may be compelled to pay for advertising that was not wanted if the postage meter user generates increased mail volume over that which was anticipated. Third, the third party

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advertiser cannot exercise any control over the recipient of the message. Thus, the third party advertiser has no assurance that a target audience would be reached. For example, advertisements (e.g. sports related or hair loss, as examples) intended primarily for males may not be relevant if the recipient of the envelope from the postage meter user was a female. Fourth, the third party advertiser cannot exercise any control over the geographic reach of the message. Here again, the third party advertiser has no assurance that the target audience would be reached. For example, advertisements (e.g. local car dealership or cleaning service, as examples) intended for a certain limited geographic region would not be relevant if the recipient of the envelope from the postage meter user was located many miles away from the certain limited geographic region. As a related example, advertisements intended for the certain limited geographic region on envelopes originating from outside of the certain limited geographic region would not benefit from the increased good will of being associated with a sender in the certain limited geographic region.

As described above, the effectiveness of the third party messages printed on envelopes is low. Because of the above drawbacks and disadvantages, the fees that third party advertisers would be willing to pay the postage meter manufacturer are relatively low. In turn, the subsidies that the postage meter manufacturer are able to pass along to the postage meter user are correspondingly relatively low. Thus, in the absence of a meaningful economic incentive there is little motivation for third party advertisers and postage meter users to participate in the above described system for placing third party advertising on envelopes.

Therefore, there is a need for an improved system that allows the postage meter manufacturer to broker the use of advertising space by third parties on envelopes. More particularly, there is a need for a system that places the messages on envelopes in a more effective manner so that third party advertisers are more likely to reach their target audiences. In this manner, the third party advertisers would be willing to pay higher fees resulting in an increased economic incentive for third party advertisers and postage meter users to participate.

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### Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides a system and methods for improving the effectiveness of third party advertising on envelopes. Generally, this is accomplished by letting the third party advertisers establish restrictions or limits on the envelopes that they would like to place their messages on. The restrictions may be based upon user (sender) parameters, recipient parameters, quantitative parameters (time, piece count, etc.) or some combination of the above.

In accordance with the present invention, there is provided a postage printing system comprising a computer, a data center and a control system. The computer is in operative communication with a printer for printing a postal indicia on an envelope. The data center is in operative communication with the computer which in turn is located remotely from the data center. The data center includes a plurality of user accounts and a plurality of advertiser accounts where each of the plurality of advertiser accounts includes respective ad data including message data and restriction data limiting the use of the message data. The control system is in operative communication with the data center and the computer and is for: (i) establishing a transaction session between a user of the computer corresponding to one of the plurality of user accounts and the data center; (ii) obtaining recipient address information from the user; and (iii) using the recipient address information and the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify message data available for printing on the envelope in conjunction with the postal indicia.

In accordance with the present invention, a method of operating a postage printing system and a method of operating a data center are also provided.

Therefore, it is now apparent that the present invention substantially overcomes the disadvantages associated with the prior art. Additional advantages of the invention will be set forth in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention. The objects and advantages of the invention may be

realized and obtained by means of the instrumentalities and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims.

### **Brief Description of the Drawings**

5 The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of the specification, illustrate presently preferred embodiments of the invention, and together with the general description given above and the detailed description of the preferred embodiments given below, serve to explain the principles of the invention. As shown throughout the drawings, like reference numerals designate like or corresponding parts.

10 Fig. 1 is a simplified representation of a postage printing system including a data center and a plurality of remotely located computer systems in electronic communication with the data center in which the present invention may be incorporated.

15 Fig. 2 is a front view of an envelope that has been processed by the postage printing system in accordance with the present invention.

Fig. 3 is a more detailed representation of the postage printing system in accordance with the present invention.

Fig. 4 is a flow chart showing the operation of the postage printing system in accordance with the present invention.

20 Fig. 5 is a schematic representation of an ad data file associated with a third party message to be printed on the envelope by the postage printing system in accordance with the present invention.

### **Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments**

Referring to Fig. 1, an example of a postage printing system 10  
25 indicative of one example of a virtual postage metering environment in which the present invention may be incorporated is shown. Generally, the postage printing system 10 includes a data center 200 in communication over any suitable communication network 110 (LAN, WAN, telephone line, internet, etc.) with a plurality of remotely located computers (personal computer,  
30 workstation, laptop computer or the like) 150. Generally, it is anticipated that the computers 150 would be located in small business offices and/or in

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printed on an adhesive label and affixed to the envelope 20 or printed concurrently with the postal indicia 30 by the printer 120. The recipient address 50 represents the delivery point for the envelope 20. A further detailed description of the printing of the recipient address 50 and the relationship of the recipient address 50 to the postal indicia 30 will be provided below. The remainder of the envelope 20 that is not occupied by the postal indicia 30, the sender address 40 and the recipient address 50 is available as advertising space 60 made up of a plurality of ad zones 60a, 60b, 60c and 60d. The advertising space 60 may contain one or more messages from third party advertisers.

Referring to Fig. 3, a more detailed schematic of the postage printing system 10 of the present invention is shown. The remote computer 150 includes a control system 152 that is in communication over a suitable communication network 110, such as: telephone lines, public and private network systems (Internet) or the like; with a control system 202 from the data center 200. The data center 200 may be based on any conventional computer based platform (PC, server, workstation, mainframe or the like) and includes the control system 202, a user database 204, an advertiser database 206, a postage evidencing system 208, an address hygiene database 210 and an address demographics database 212, all of which are in operative communication with each other over using conventional means. The user database 204 contains information concerning individual user accounts, such as: user name, user address, preferred payment vehicle or arrangements (periodic invoice, direct credit card authorization, electronic funds transfer, etc.), and the like, that have been established with the postage meter manufacturer. Similarly, the advertiser database 206 contains information concerning individual advertiser accounts, such as: advertiser name, advertiser address, preferred payment vehicle or arrangements (periodic invoice, direct credit card authorization, electronic funds transfer, etc.), ad data and the like, that have been established with the postage meter manufacturer. The address hygiene database 210 may employ any suitable database for use in cleansing submitted addresses to ensure that they are complete and correct, such as the Address Matching System (AMS) available

from the United States Postal Service, Cross Check™ software system available from Pitney Bowes Inc. of Stamford, Connecticut or any other commercially available system for cleansing addresses. The address demographics database 212 may employ any suitable database containing statistics relevant to certain geographic locations. As examples, various databases exist that contain detailed demographic information by zip code, such as: PRIZM available from Claritas Inc. (see Internet URL www.claritas.com), United States census information or any other database that is generally known and commercially available.

The postage evidencing system 208 accurately records, tracks and accounts for the postal funds that are dispensed to the remote computer 150. In the preferred environment, the postage evidencing system 208 includes one or postage meters or postal security devices (PSD). That is, the data center 200 may buy postage in advance from postal authority and store it in the postage meter in conventional fashion. Thus, the data center 200 may establish one postage meter per account or multiple accounts per postage meter. In either event, the postage meter manufacturer takes care of obtaining, recharging and inspecting the postage meter as required by the postal authority. On the other hand, the postage evidencing system 208 may not include a postage meter. As a trusted third party to the postal authority, the postage meter manufacturer may merely be allowed to forward a payment to the postal authority on a regular basis indicative of the amount of postage dispensed. In yet another alternative, the postal authority may operate the data center 200 itself.

With the structure of the postage printing system 10 described as above, the operational characteristics will now be described with respect to a typical transaction conducted between the remote computer 150 and the data center 200. Referring primarily to Fig. 4 while referencing the structure of Figs. 1, 2 and 3, a flow chart of a transaction routine 600 in accordance with the present invention is shown. The diagnostic routine 600 may be comprised of any suitable combination of software, firmware and hardware subsystems executed by the remote computer control system 152 and the data center control system 202. Generally, the activities of the data center

At 602, the transaction routine 600 commences when the remote computer 150 contacts the data center 200 to establish a session for the purpose of obtaining postage. In this manner, the remote computer 150 and the data center 200 recognize each other as authentic using any conventional mutual authentication technique. This generally involves the user of the remote computer 150 transmitting a valid account number or other identifying information and a corresponding password. In this manner, postage is not inadvertently supplied to one party while a second party is invoiced for the postage. Once the session has been established, at 604, the data center 200 obtains relevant data necessary to produce the postal indicia 30 for the envelope 20. This typically involves the user transmitting a desired postage amount and a recipient address 50 to the data center 200. Preferably, this is accomplished by having the user enter appropriate data fields (postage amount, 3 or 4 line address block, etc.) in a menu screen prior to uploading to the data center 200. Alternatively, the address information may be retrieved from a word processing document such as a letter. Next, at 606, the data center 200 performs address hygiene. Although address hygiene is not required, the results of the message selection will likely be improved with the cleansed addresses. The recipient address 50 received from the user is compared against the address hygiene database 210. At this time, any misspelled words are corrected and any missing information (zip code or zip +4) is filled in from the address hygiene database 210 to yield a hygiened or corrected recipient address 50. If the data center 200 cannot verify the integrity of the recipient address 50 received from the user, then the user may be instructed to check the recipient address 50 and resubmit it.

Next, at 608, the data center 200 searches the third party advertiser database 206 for those advertisers that are interested in advertising on the

envelope 20 associated with the hygiened recipient address 50. For the reasons discussed above, not every third party advertiser may want to advertise on every envelope 20. Generally, this step involves establishing an ad data profile for each advertisement and comparing the hygiened recipient address 50 to the ad data profile. Referring to Fig. 5, a schematic representation of an ad data profile file 207 associated with a third party message to be printed on the envelope 20 by the postage printing system 10 is shown. The ad data includes: graphic image data 207a; a subsidy rate data 207b; a billing rate 207c and restriction data. The restriction data may include sender restriction data, addressee restriction data and non-addressee (quantitative) restriction data, or any combination of types of restriction data. Preferably, the addressee restriction data includes: geographic restriction data 207d and recipient restriction data 207e. Preferably, the non-addressee restriction data includes: date restriction data 207f; multi-ad restriction data 207g; and ad space restriction data 207g. Piece count restriction data and budget limit data defining a maximum amount of advertising charges for a given time period may also be included in the non-addressee restriction data. The graphic image data 207a is representative of the desired message and may be stored in any manner of well known formats, such as: PDF, JPEG, GIF and the like. The subsidy rate data 207b includes information corresponding to the credit value that will be applied to the user's account for authorizing printing of the third party message on the envelope 20. The billing rate data 207c includes information corresponding to the debit value that will be applied to the third party advertiser's account in conjunction with printing of the third party message on the envelope 20. The geographic restriction data 207d provides an indication of what geographic areas the third party advertiser wants to target. This may be manifested by a restriction on the originating location or the destination location or preferably both. The recipient restriction data 207e provides an indication of the target audience. For example, distinctions may be made between a commercial and a residential address. In the preferred embodiment, the commercial versus residential distinction may be obtained directly from the user or from the Address Matching System. Alternatively, this may also be accomplished by

interrogating the hygiened recipient address 50 for certain 'key words'  
indicative of company, such as: inc., incorporated, co., company and the like.  
As another example that may be used independent from or in combination  
with the example previously discuss, the address demographics database  
5 212 allows further targeting of messages. Generally, income, age and other  
demographic statistics are available for different regions of the country. Thus,  
the delivery point zip code in the hygiened recipient address 50 may be cross  
referenced to the address demographics database 212 and the resulting  
demographic statistics compared with the third party advertiser's  
10 requirements. For example, a luxury car manufacturer may only want its ads  
going to private residences from regions where the average income is above  
a predetermined threshold. The date restriction data 207f provides an  
indication of what dates the third party advertiser wants to advertise on. For  
example, expiration dates could be established beyond which the message  
15 will not be dispensed. As another example, periodic cycles (1<sup>st</sup> week of  
month, last week of month, on Mondays, 2 weeks before a holiday, etc.) could  
be established during which the message is available for printing. The multi-  
ad restriction data 207g provides an indication of whether or not the third  
party advertiser allows another third party advertiser to occupy to advertise on  
20 the envelope 20. The sentiment being that a multiplicity of messages will  
dilute the effectiveness of the individual messages versus if the individual  
messages were used singularly. If the third party advertiser allows other  
advertisers, then a reduced credit indicated in the subsidy rate data 207b and  
a reduced debit indicated in the billing rate data 207c may be applied when  
25 multiple messages are employed. The ad space restriction data 207h  
provides an indication of which ad zones 60a, 60b, 60c and 60d the third  
party advertiser authorizes for use with the message. Thus, the third party  
advertiser may exercise some control over where on the envelope 20 the  
message is printed. Similarly, as an option, the user may also provide an  
30 indication of which ad zones 60a, 60b, 60c and 60d the message may be  
printed in. For example, the user may be using an envelope 20 with  
preprinted images already occupying a portion of one or more ad zones 60a,  
60b, 60c and 60d. In this scenario, the ad space restriction data 207h and

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account to reflect the transaction information, such as: the date, the selected message 70, the corresponding advertising fee, any additional fees associated with providing the above described services and any other relevant data. At a later time, the data center 200 exercises the preferred  
5 payment vehicle for the user and the selected third party advertiser, respectively.

Base on the above description and the associated drawings, it should now be apparent that the present invention improves the ability of third party advertisers more efficiently reach their target audience through advertising on  
10 envelopes.

Many features of the preferred embodiment represent design choices selected to best exploit the inventive concept as implemented in a particular virtual postage meter environment. However, those skilled in the art will recognize that various modifications can be made without departing from the  
15 spirit of the present invention. For example, the address hygiene database 210 and the third party advertiser database 206 may be resident at the remote computer 150. Thus, a portion of the functionality of the data center 200 described above would be off loaded to the remote computer 150. The remote computers 150 could then periodically receive updated information  
20 concerning the address hygiene database 210 and the third party advertiser database 206 by any conventional means. Thus, those skilled in the art will recognize that there are many ways to distribute the functionality described above between the data center 200 and the remote computer 150. As yet another example, different billing rates may be applied for multi-color versus  
25 mono-color printing capability. Thus, user's with multi-color printers may be offered higher subsidies.

As another example, the selected message 70 and the postal indicia 30 need not be printed at the same time. The postal indicia 30 may be printed first, by a closed system postage meter for example, and then  
30 scanned for uploading to the data center 200 where the message selection process occurs.

Therefore, the inventive concept in its broader aspects is not limited to the specific details of the preferred embodiments described above, but is

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defined by the appended claims and their equivalents.

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**What is Claimed is:**

1. A postage printing system, comprising:
  - a computer in operative communication with a printer for printing a postal indicia on an envelope;
  - a data center in operative communication with the computer, the computer being located remotely from the data center, the data center including a plurality of postage accounts and a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective ad data having message data and restriction data, each of the message data representative of a message, respectively, for printing on the envelope;
  - a control system in operative communication with the data center and the computer for:
    - establishing a transaction session between a user of the computer and the data center, the user corresponding to one of the plurality of postage accounts;
    - obtaining recipient address information from the user; and
    - using the recipient address information and the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify a subset of messages available for printing on the envelope.
2. The postage printing system of claim 1, wherein:
  - the control system is further for:
    - receiving from the user an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing on the envelope.
3. The postage printing system of claim 2, wherein:
  - the control system is further for:
    - applying a credit to the postage account corresponding to the user; and
    - applying a debit to the advertiser account corresponding to the

selected message.

4. The postage printing system of claim 3, wherein:  
each of the restriction data, respectively, includes addressee restriction data and non-addressee restriction data.
5. The postage printing system of claim 4, wherein:  
the addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: commercial/residential restrictions; demographic restrictions and geographic restrictions.
6. The postage printing system of claim 5, wherein:  
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and  
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
7. The postage printing system of claim 4, wherein:  
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and  
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
8. A method of operating a postage printing system, the postage printing system including a computer in operative communication with a printer for printing a postal indicia on an envelope and a data center in operative communication with the computer, the computer being located remotely from the data center, the data center including a plurality of postage accounts and a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective ad data having message data and restriction data, each of the message data representative of a message, respectively, for printing on

the envelope, the method comprising the step(s) of:

establishing a transaction session between a user of the computer and the data center, the user corresponding to one of the plurality of postage accounts;  
obtaining recipient address information from the user; and  
using the recipient address information and the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify a subset of messages available for printing on the envelope.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the step(s) of:  
receiving from the user an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing on the envelope.
10. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step(s) of:  
applying a credit to the postage account corresponding to the user;  
and  
applying a debit to the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein:  
each of the restriction data, respectively, includes addressee restriction data and non-addressee restriction data.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein:  
the addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: commercial/residential restrictions; demographic restrictions and geographic restrictions.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein:  
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and  
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions;

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multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein:
  - the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and
  - the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
15. A method of operating a data center, the data center in operative communication with a computer system including a printer for printing a postal indicia on an envelope, the method comprising the step(s) of:
  - maintaining a plurality of postage accounts;
  - maintaining a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective ad data having message data and restriction data, each of the message data representative of a message, respectively, for printing on the envelope;
  - establishing a transaction session with a user of the computer system, the user corresponding to one of the plurality of postage accounts;
  - receiving recipient address information from the user; and
  - using the recipient address information and the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify a subset of messages available for printing on the envelope.
16. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step(s) of:
  - receiving from the user an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing on the envelope.
17. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step(s) of:
  - applying a credit to the postage account corresponding to the user;
  - and

applying a debit to the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein:  
each of the restriction data, respectively, includes addressee restriction data and non-addressee restriction data.
19. The method of claim 18, wherein:  
the addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: commercial/residential restrictions; demographic restrictions and geographic restrictions.
20. The method of claim 19, wherein:  
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and  
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
21. The method of claim 18, wherein:  
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and  
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
22. The postage printing system of claim 2, wherein:  
the control system is further for:  
communicating a data packet to the computer, the data packet including first data indicative of a variable portion of the postal indicia and second data indicative of the selected message.
23. The postage printing system of claim 22, wherein:

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the computer utilizes the data packet to cause the printer to print the selected message in conjunction with the postal indicia on the envelope.

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**POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING**  
**SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF THIRD PARTY MESSAGES**

**Abstract of the Invention**

A postage printing system, comprising a computer, a data center and a  
5 control system. The computer is in operative communication with a printer for  
printing a postal indicia on an envelope. The data center is in operative  
communication with the computer which in turn is located remotely from the  
data center. The data center includes a plurality of user accounts and a  
plurality of advertiser accounts where each of the plurality of advertiser  
10 accounts includes respective ad data including message data and restriction  
data. The control system is in operative communication with the data center  
and the computer and is for: (i) establishing a transaction session between a  
user of the computer corresponding to one of the plurality of user accounts  
and the data center; (ii) obtaining recipient address information from the user;  
15 and (iii) using the recipient address information and the restriction data from  
the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify message data available for  
printing on the envelope in conjunction with the postal indicia.

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FIG. 1

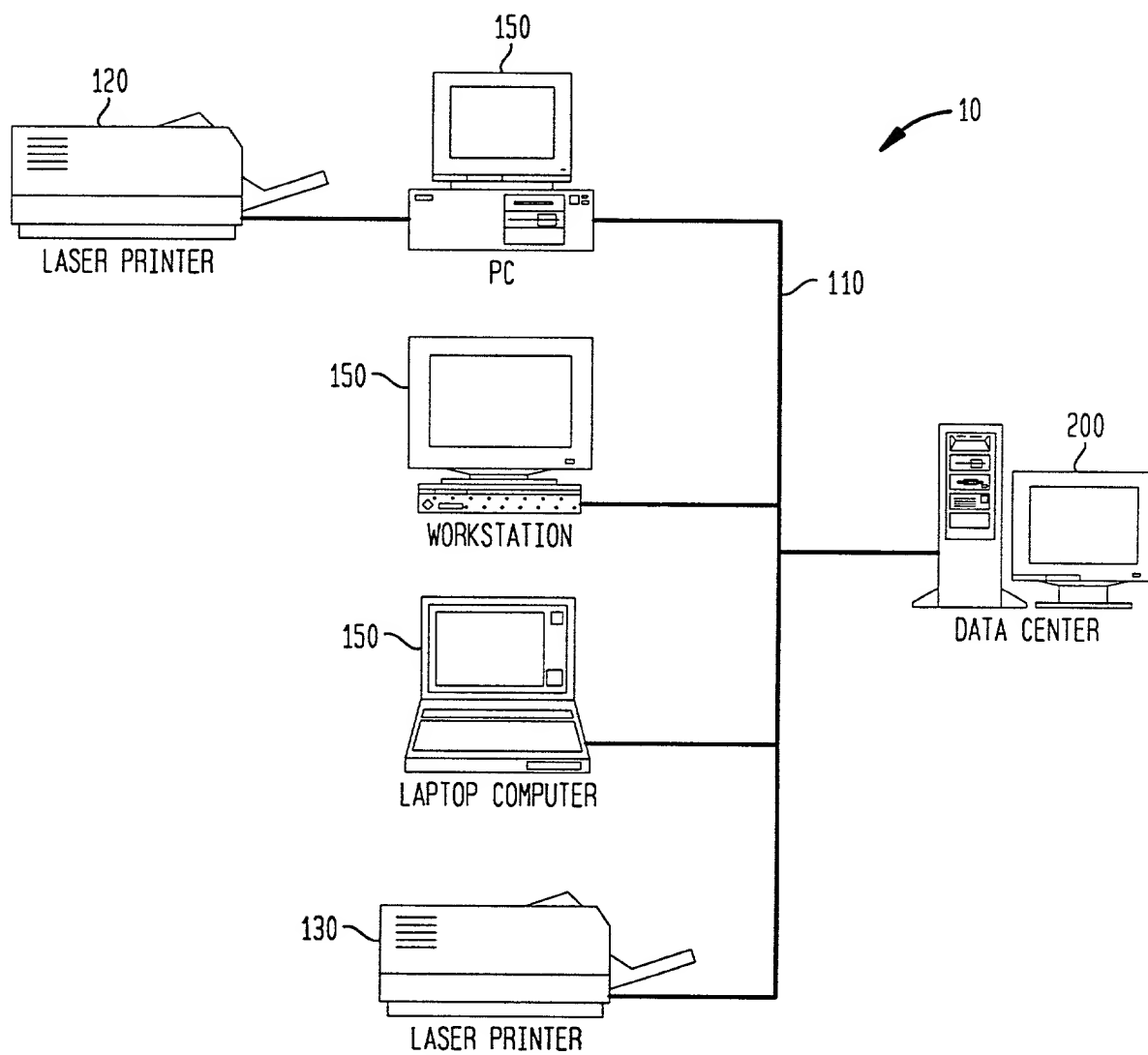


FIG. 4

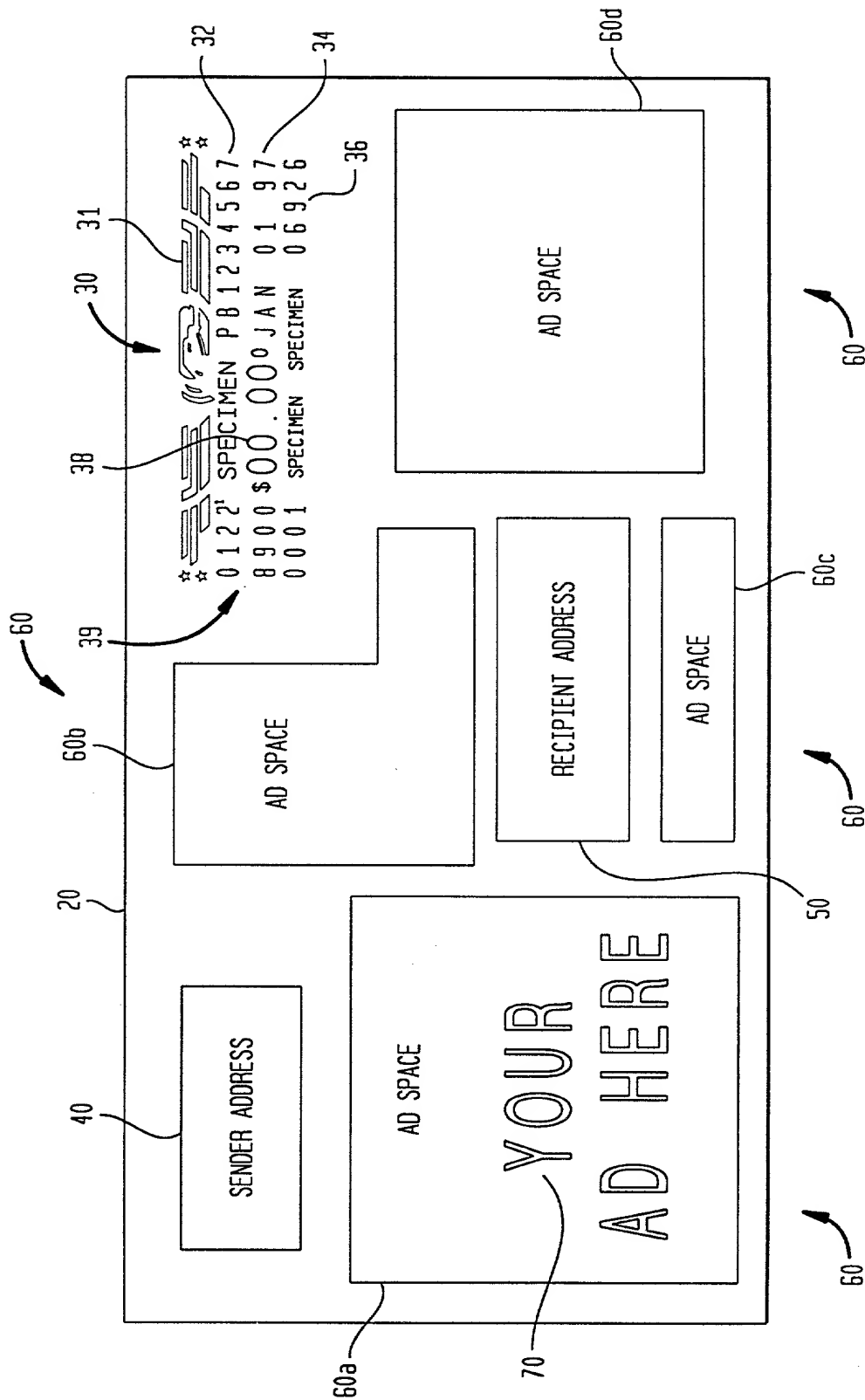


FIG. 3

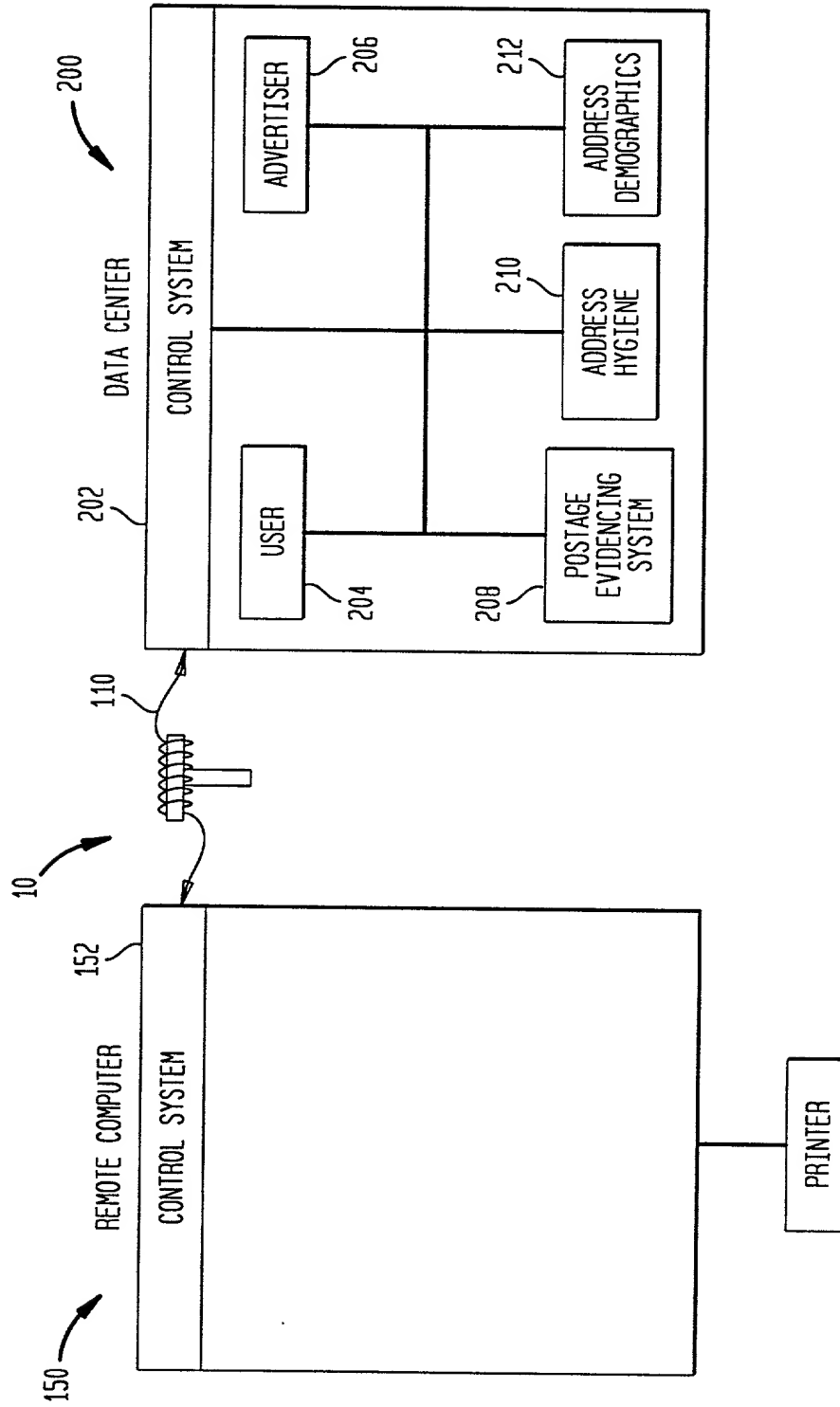


FIG. 4

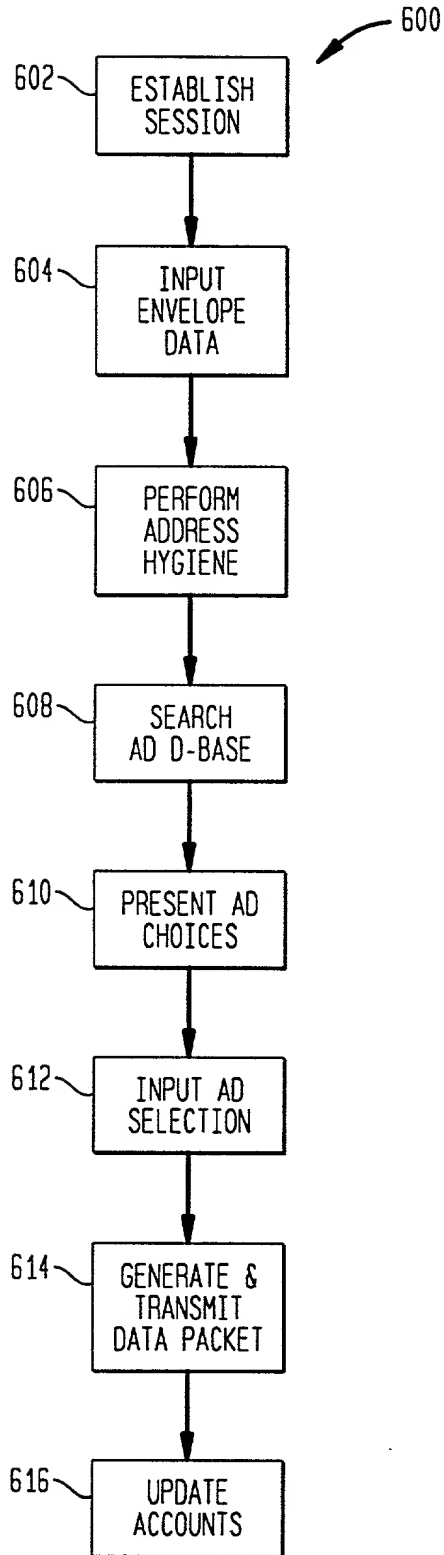
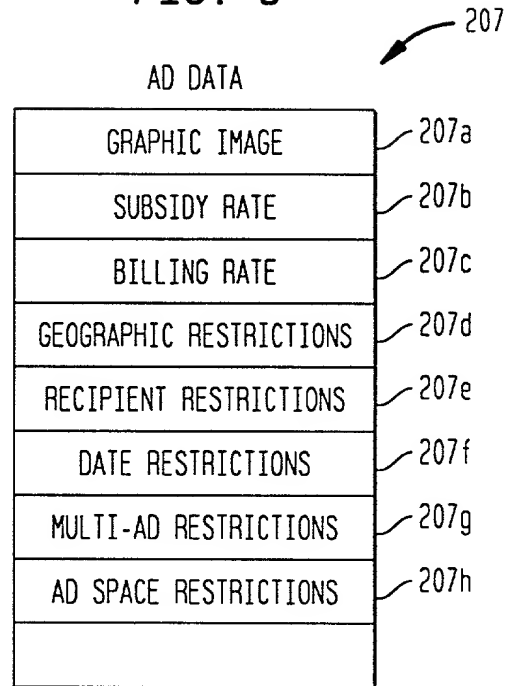


FIG. 5




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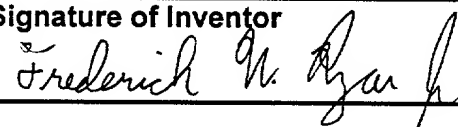
Reg. No. 39,134  
Reg. No. 25,233  
Reg. No. 24,020  
Reg. No. 26,307

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<b>DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY</b> Patent Application			Attorney's Docket Number E-796	
Page 2 of 3				
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12/16/98

<b>DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY</b> Patent Application			Attorney's Docket Number E-796	
Page 3 of 3				
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